

INTRODUCTION

THIS book is based on a series of lectures on *Religious Thought on Social Questions in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, which were delivered at King's College, London, for the Holland Foundation in March and April 1922. It does not carry the subject beyond the latter part of the seventeenth century, and it makes no pretence of dealing with the history either of economic theory or of economic organization, except in so far as changes in theory and organization are related to changes in religious opinion. Having been prevented by circumstances from publishing the lectures immediately, I have taken advantage of the delay to re-write part of them, with the addition of some matter which could not easily be included in them in their original form, I must thank my fellow-trustees for their indulgence in allowing me to postpone publication.

The development of religious opinion on questions of social ethics is a topic which has been treated in England by the late Dr. Cunningham, by Sir William Ashley, whose essay on *The Canonist Doctrine* first interested me in the subject, by Mr. G* G. Coulton, Mr.

H. G. Wood, and Mr. G. O'Brien, But it is no
 reflection
 on their work to say that the most
 important contri-
 butions of recent years have come from
 continental
 students, in particular Troeltsch, Choisy,
 Sombart,
 Brentano, Levy, and above all, Max Weber,
 whose cele-
 brated essay on *Die Protestantische Ethik*
und der Geist
des Kapitalismus gave a new turn to the
 discussion. No
 one can work, on however humble a scale,
 in the same
 field, without being conscious of the heavy
 obligation
 under which these scholars have laid
 him. While I